



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 13, 2020

Agenda Item: Peregrine Falcon Falconry Take

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

Background: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service de-listed peregrine falcons, range-wide in 1999 when there were fewer than 30 known occupied territories in Montana. Monitoring since that time has shown steady increases in the number of nesting pairs and the production of young, primarily in western Montana. More than 100 occupied territories have been observed annually since 2012 with an average production of more than two fledged birds per year/territory. Estimates of nest distribution and productivity are conservative as a mandatory post-delisting monitoring period ended in 2015 and monitoring since that time has not kept up with population expansion into central and eastern Montana.

Previous take proposals have been based on the 2012 productivity estimate of 203 young fledged and the agreed take of not more than 5 percent of annual productivity described in FWP's 2007 Final Environmental Assessment (EA). In the 2012-13, 2014-15, 2016-17 and 2018-19 bienniums take operated under a 10-bird quota for resident falconers with an additional permit for non-resident take. Resident take over these bienniums resulted in the take of six, three, four, and three peregrines respectively of the 10 allowed per biennium. Three additional birds were taken by non-residents. While this low level of take over the years demonstrates a small demand for wild born Montana peregrines, FWP has been urged by the USFWS not to alter the current quota system until take has been normalized across all western states. This normalization, or opening of take, will hopefully occur during the 2020-21 biennium.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Public comment will be accepted on this proposal.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Based on findings in FWP's 2007 Final EA and the history of peregrine take in Montana, FWP proposes that the commission:

- authorize resident take of 10 nestling or fledged peregrines during the 2020-21 biennium.
- authorize non-resident take of one nestling or fledged peregrine through a 2020-21 permit.
- restrict take to the period of June 1 to Aug. 31.
- impose a two-year waiting period for any falconer successful in taking a peregrine.
- allow only general or master falconers to take peregrines.
- prohibit take from eight nests that offer high-value wildlife viewing opportunity (see list).
- prohibit the sale, barter or exchange of birds from the wild.
- require each falconer who takes a young peregrine from the wild report the take to FWP and the USFWS within five days of take of the bird. This step will provide FWP the ability to monitor the number of birds taken and any need for an emergency closure of the biennial season.

The following rule from the previous biennium does not apply to 2020-21 take:

- prohibit take from eastern Montana to encourage expansion of the breeding population.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission approve FWP's proposal to authorize the take of up to 10 peregrine falcons for falconry purposes by residents and one peregrine falcon for falconry purposes by nonresidents during the 2020-21 take period.